

Thursday, May 27th, 2004
Baton Rouge, Louisiana

CAN THE PRESIDENT BE RE-ELECTED?

The polls show him with less popular support for re-election than any sitting President in the last half century. So can George Bush win in November, this time without the help of the Supreme Court? The answer depends a lot on what he does in the next 60 days. As the incumbent, the race is his to lose. But he's going to have to make some major changes.

Not everyone feels **uncertain**. Some have even had a vision that the Pres is a shoo-in. In January, Rev. Pat Robertson said on the 700 Club that he had received a tip: "I think George Bush is going to win in a walk," he told viewers. "I really believe I'm hearing from the Lord it's going to be like a blowout election in 2004." The only problem is that the good Rev. got the same message in 1992 about another President Bush, and we know what happened to him.

Whatever the President's current problems, he starts out with a solid base of support. Republicans control, besides the White House, both Houses of Congress, a majority of the governor's mansions and a majority of seats in the nation's state legislatures. A recent Gallup poll has determined that twice as many Americans (41%) describe themselves as "conservative" than as "liberal" (19%). And conservatives are rock solid in the Bush camp.

But his problem is with moderate Republicans and independents. Kerry has a solid lead in most polls with independents, and a large number of moderate and liberal Republicans are undecided. Bush's problems with these groups are linked directly to deteriorating perceptions of how he is dealing with Iraq and the economy. Economic growth at home and finality abroad are critical to the President's re-election.

First Iraq. (Words of wisdom coming from this ole Ferriday boy.) Where to begin? Start by re-reading (with hopes that he's read it already) Barbara Tuchman's "*The March of Folly: From Troy to Vietnam*." The Pulitzer Prize winner tells of disastrous decisions through history of governments pursuing policies contrary to their own interests, despite the availability of feasible alternatives. "The folly" in Vietnam, she writes, "consisted not in pursuit of a goal in ignorance of the obstacles but in persistence in the pursuit despite accumulating evidence that the goal was unattainable, and the effect disproportionate to the American interest and eventually damaging to American society, reputation and disposable power in the world." Simply put, it's easy to get in, hell to get out, and the price we are paying is not worth the cost.

Second, do what I did this past weekend. Go watch Brad Pitt all bronzed up in the movie, "*Troy*." King Agamemnon steps in it big time by being bullheaded in pushing an

agenda of settling old scores and broadening an empire. And that's how our motives are viewed worldwide today.

The President made a pretty decent beginning in his speech this past Tuesday by setting out a five point plan that lets the U.S. begin an exit with some degree of saving face. We finally seem to be rethinking our interests and goals, and realizing that any thoughts of an Iraqi democracy have to be tempered with an understanding of Iraqi history and the obstacle of regional rivalries. And all this will take a lot of time. Bush can say we went into Iraq for the right reasons. But it's time to put together a federation of the three major political groups in Iraq (the Shiites, the Sunnis, and the Kurds.), work hard to garner more international support, and declare success. We went to Iraq to put out the fire. We're not the police department. We're not the insurance company .We're the fire department. And the fire is out. It's time to move on.

No additional U.S. troops. Do whatever it takes to bring other countries into the mix. Begin with NATO members since they too have a vested interest in finding an acceptable settlement. Start talking about no longer "staying the course" but now it's time to "change" the course. Then spend the rest of this campaign patting yourself on the back, declare victory, and tell all who listen that "it was a tough job but somebody had to do it." That, of course, won't pacify the democrats, but the important group, the independent voters, just might feel it's time to move on to domestic issues.

(And did you notice that the President's speech on his solution to the Iraqi problem was not carried on any of the major television networks? They figured it was much more important to cover scheduled programming like "*THE SWAN.*" *Makes sense.*)

One more bit of advice, Mr. President. You are stuck with Rumsfeld. To let him go would be admitting a major failure, and would only make the wolves hungrier. But get him out of the limelight. We see him on T.V. every day. And we never see Collin Powell. The Secretary of State has high marks with independent voters. He should be out front more. For gosh sake he is the only major figure in your administration that has any military experience. What ever his value after the election, he's needed now. Don't underutilize a guy who helps in the voting block that's needed.

Now let's face it. There's a lot of controversy swirling around your administration. Yet no one ever admits that "mistakes were made." Of course mistakes were made. Every president makes them. You ran on a platform of personal accountability. Admit some screw ups, but forcefully say you have learned from the past, that changes are being made, and you are ready and qualified to move on. Many voters are forgiving, particularly in times of war, but they have to be asked and have something to forgive.

So nationally, you can claim the war is winding down and the economy seems to be picking up steam. But you are not going to be re-elected on these two issues. Remember the old axiom that "all politics is local." There are realistically about 10 states in play that will win the election for you. The Bush team is going to have to "individualize" messages state by state. Picking and choosing what's important to local economies. (A

set of local Louisiana issues is set out in my May 6th column.) With cable T.V. and talk radio, it's not that difficult to develop a specific message for each of these "swing" states.

Basically, the message the Bush team needs to convey is: "hey, the war effort didn't work out as well as we would have liked but we're bringing it to an end and the economy was a little slow coming around, but we really care about you on a local level, so give us the benefit of the doubt and stick with us another four years."

Of course, keep pounding Kerry. Everyone hates negative campaigns, but they work. And keep raising enormous sums of money. Most of this is distasteful. But like it or not, that's how you win elections. Concise, short and sweet. Oh I could go on for pages with all the details. But my fee would be way too high.

BREAUX STILL SOUGHT AFTER BY CANDIDATES.

Despite stepping down from public life in six months, Sen. John Breaux is still being sought out by numerous office seekers. And in the Third District (Deep south Louisiana), every candidate wants the Senator at their side. Several months ago, Breaux hosted a reception for former state Rep Charlie Melancon (D). Last week, he stood by the side of Billy Tauzin III (R), his godson, who announced for the seat his father is vacating. . And on June 2nd, Breaux will co-host with Sen. Mary Landrieu a reception in Washington for Charmaine Caccioppi, a Raceland, La. Democrat who has worked for both Landrieu and former Sen. Bennett Johnson.

It's not unusual for a popular official to lend support to more than one candidate. I remember back in 1979 when then Gov. Edwards, at the height of his popularity, did two T.V. spots in the Lt. Governor's race; one for the eventual winner Bobby Freeman and another for former Rep. Jim Donelon. Edwards message was that they were both well qualified and good guys. Look for Breaux to take the same approach in the 3rd

Breaux will no doubt be sought out by other congressional candidates, and he will be asked to take an active roll in the Kerry presidential campaign. So even though he is retiring from the Senate, he still will have a full agenda this fall.

STILL ANOTHER MARTHA STEWART UPDATE

It seemed like everywhere one looked last week, there were reported news accounts of FBI agents and other Justice Department officials lying in court under oath. It's almost like it's becoming a pattern.

First, there was the FBI whistle-blower in the Oklahoma murder trial of Terry Nichols who testified that an FBI forensic scientist he had trained lied about key evidence in the trial. Then there was the FBI counter-intelligence supervisor who pleaded guilty to lying about a long-running affair he had with a Chinese spy.

And of course the Martha Stewart case. A U.S. Secret Service analyst was indicted for lying on the witness stand about key evidence in this case. Now here we have Martha charged with lying, and now it comes out that the witness against her is a liar. Stewart was not charged with any other crime. Just lying. Now a key witness against her is charged with lying. So how can she not be given a new trial?

And if you want hear about a really bazaar case of FBI misconduct, I remember hearing about some Louisiana official (I think he was the Insurance guy), who was convicted of give false statements when it was proven there was no crime. He was charged with lying by an FBI agent who had a history of making numerous investigative mistakes while working for the FBI. The FBI agent took extensive and detailed notes of his interview with the insurance guy, but refused to produce the notes at the trial. When the notes were finally made public a year after the trial took place, none of the supposed false statements the FBI agent testified had been said could be found in the notes. So who was the liar?

(For a complete review and analysis of this really strange and unjust case, go to <http://www.jimbrownla.com>. Index will list all aspects of this case, with comments about how strange and unfair the verdict was from news columnists throughout the country.)

Little known facts I learned while in school in England.

Many years ago, in Scotland, a new game was invented. It was ruled “Gentlemen Only...Ladies Forbidden”...and thus the word GOLF entered into the English Language.

It is impossible to lick your elbow.

In Shakespeare’s time, mattresses were secured on bed frames by ropes. When you pulled on the ropes the mattress tightened, making the bed firmer to sleep on. Hence the phrase.....”Goodnight, sleep tight.”

In English pubs (where I became a first rate dart thrower), ale is ordered by pints and quarts. So in old England, when customers got unruly, the bartender would yell at them “Mind your pints and quarts, and settle down.” It’s where we got the phrase “mind your P’s and Q’s.”

AND FINALLY, at least 75% of you who read this will try to lick your elbow.

Peace and Justice.

Jim Brown